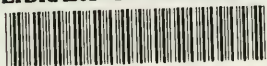


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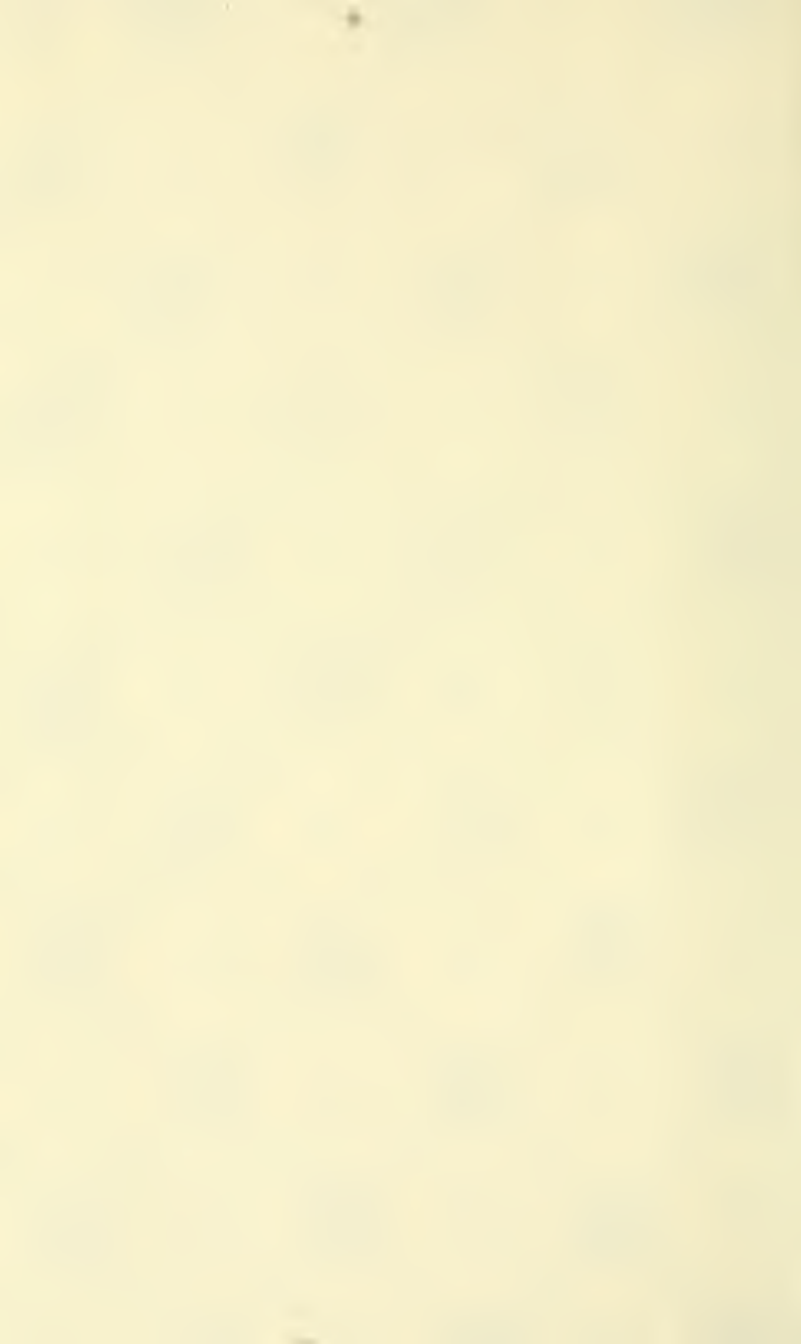


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HILLSBORO IN THE WAR



HILLSBORO IN THE WAR

RICHARD D. WARE



BOSTON
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1917

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Two 1.

The only Autocrat whose mandates were ever grateful to the people of these United Democracies once declared that Boston was not a place but a state of mind. It might be said equally well of Hillsboro. The county and the state of mind were both established when the Scotch-Irish who had founded the Londonderry settlement drifted farther west into the hills and dug themselves in. They have never been dug out again. Newcomers from all countries outnumber their descendants, but the spirit of the Londonderry men still speaks. And so speaks Hillsboro. Or is silent. These men or their sons left the Hillsboro settlements in turn and went still farther into the western country, and wherever they went, the state of mind went with them and still persists.

Those Scotch-Irish took everything hard. They took their thinking hard. They were stubborn men, and not being wont to yield, insisted that facts be proved facts before they yielded to their stubbornness. Their minds were clear visioned in simplicity, concrete, keen to cut away the veneer of sham and sharp to prick the bladder of hifalutin. They were men who dwelt upon and valued past experience. They were slow to leap at the New This and the New That dangled before them. If the merit of those things was proved they became facts and were accepted as such.

In those days a great deal of men's thinking was on things political, and they took their politics hard. Hillsboro still does. Republicans are Lincoln Republicans. Democrats are Jacksonian Democrats, not Jeffersonian nor Christian Science Democrats.

They took their daily labors hard, in that nothing was too hard to be undertaken and put through.

They took their fighting hard. Never were more tenacious and bitter fighters. In their minds, to fight was to beat up the enemy, private or public, to such degree as might be necessary to prove to him that he was beaten, and then make him do what he had been unwilling to do unbeaten. "Beat him first" was "Safety First" in those days of Indians, Hessians and Red Coats, and the Hessians are still with us.

Most of the subjects which follow have to do with the Hillsboro state of mind as to facts appearing in the early days of the war after this country entered it.

A few of them have to do with fancies of my own.

As to form, why should not all verse be called "free"? No one ever buys it.

Why, therefore, while the air is full of Freedom and its flags, drum beats, shells, bullets, shrieks, groans and other emblems, shall not this great

Democracy make all verse and song free, along
with its justice, health and pursuit of happiness?
It would cost but little in these days of billions.

R. D. W.

Amherst, New Hampshire,
August, 1917.



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HILLSBORO IN THE WAR



ALL THE WORLD'S AT WAR

And all the iron mongery,
Castings and forgings, things mechanical,
The whole vast enginery
Of cogs and toggles, wires, cranks and wheels
Which man has reared, a soulless Frankenstein,
Now turns to rend him and destroy.
A war has seven stages. First the typewriter
Clicking and clacking off the fateful word
Some autocrat has spoken as his will;
And then the printing press with rumbling roar
Spreading the printed word on broadcast page
To rouse the honor of the land to make it good.
Then the trip hammers crash on clanging steel
Forging great billets for the mighty guns
Which in their turn shall blast abroad the word
Into the brains and bodies of the foe.
And then the whirling, never-ceasing lathes
Turning the shells to bear aloft the word,
Affronting God's own heavens with their screams.
Then steaming vats and bubbling retorts
Simmer and surge with fierce reactions strained
From which are born explosives for the guns
and shells.
The sixth stage shifts into the offices and counting
rooms
Of money changers, men with things for sale,
contractors,

Where silently, well oiled, wheels within wheels
 Make the machine of Business move on
In subtle swift accomplishment. Then last of all
 Upon the roll of martial mechanisms,
'The Government like car of Juggernaut appears,
 Slow, creaking, rusty, wrenched,
But irresistible.

THE PIGEONS

There were some pigeon-holes beneath the eaves
Which led into the loft within the barn,
So, that they might fulfill their obvious purpose
there,

I got some pigeons, to go in and out those holes,
And sit upon the ridgepole, cooingly,

Or trot about in love chase in the yard.

Six loving pairs they were,

Fast wedded severally

Or so the vendor said,

And white as snow,

So that they well might seem

Another apostolic twelve

In robes immaculate;

Emblems of peace,

Domestic love

And gentleness.

Put not one's utter trust

In emblems!

They're all right till the britchin' breaks

And then—

But let us to our doves.

Beyond all things I wished to watch them fly,
Gleaming and flashing in the summer sun

Or like white snow flakes out of winter skies,
But this I learned

Was not to be as yet,

For such was their instinctive love of home
That back to Melrose
They would wing their way
Assuredly,
If soon let loose
Just as that song bird
The fair Geraldine
Is wont at times to flit
To her home town and theirs
For rest and peace
From tortured Toscas and bruised Butterflies.
So they were close confined up in the loft
And left to their devices,
Which were such
That when came spring I found
A flock of fifty
Perching on the beams,
Grunting and growling like dogs over bones,
Or uttering a cry which sounds more like
"Kruk-kruk-ker-roo,
Wuk-wuk"
Than anything,
And which I'm sure must mean
"You are the only girl I ever loved."
So first I learned that pigeons do not coo.
Then
That for progenitive accomplishment
The hare's a tortoise to them,
While as to plighted troth

A sailor of the Seven Seas
Each sea with seven ports of call
And at each port
Seven syren sweethearts
Waiting watchfully
Is slothful laggard in the lists of love
Compared to one of these
Sweet ruffians.
And with these appetites
Were more.
Such gluttons of the trough
Swine never were,
Pushing and crowding,
Strong elbowing the weak,
Tossing and wasting what they did not gorge.
Great guzzlers too they were.
The legend of the dove
Began to totter
On its pedestal.
Then came a day
When two fat squabs
From pulpy nakedness
In parti-colored garb appeared,
In lieu of the white habit of the flock.
Up strutted in cold blood
A squad
Of bull-necked executioners
And beat them on the head
And slew them.

So I learned that doves
 Were murderers.
In spite of crimes
 I sought to set them free,
So one bright day in June
 I let them loose.
Out-swarming from the holes they came
 And making swift survey,
Into the air they swept,
 Wheeling, circling,
Flashing in the sun,
 The rushing of the swooping wings
Like wind among the pines.
 Then with eyes satisfied
I went down to the field.
 At noon returning, work there done,
From the young garden by the barn
 Up leaped the flock
Aloft to nearby roof
 And looked down on the havoc they had made.
Young beets pulled up;
 Young cauliflowers broke;
Young cabbages laid low upon the ground.
 Such slaughter of the innocent
There had not been
 Since Pharaoh's time.
Seed beds with flowering plants
 Were tramped and torn;

Green heads of lettuce wilted in the sun
Leaves scissored small;
Young rosebushes, inedible,
Stood stark and stripped.
So had the gentle doves come down
Like the Assyrian
Upon the fold,
And so when they went up that night
They stayed there
Behind bars.
That settled the sweet legend of the dove.
Then came the war abroad,
And as I read
How the invaders of a peaceful land
Had roared and blasphemed,
Ravished, slain,
And laid it waste,
All these things seemed
Familiar to the mind;
And then it turned
To understanding of the Doves,—
Their whole Kultur
Was German!
In cynic mood
And thought of the efficiency
That nation sought
On such affairs as these
I wrote—

Back to the kennel with the Dogs of War.

Let the fierce brutes lie growling in their lair.

Throw wide the dove cotes to the winged hosts

And loose them hurtling through the air.

Bred murderous by Man, fly forth,

Ungentled, turned to harpies by his will ;

His newest allies in his lust of war,

And join the vultures where they sate their fill.

Would that thy wings still greater weight might
waft

Of dire destruction from the sky to launch ;

No more to bear as sign of love and peace

The futile burden of the olive branch.

Thy brighter iris smear with pestilence

And loose disease and death along thy path ;

God's messenger turned fiend in whited plumage

To be the engine of Man's bestial wrath.

Bear traitrous messages from camps beleaguered,

Bear heartbreak to the stricken ones afar ;

Such are they tasks, thou bird of evil omen

When men are at their horrid work of war.

And soon,

As if in answer to a prophecy,

Der Taube

Swept across the sky.

THE CENSORS

Freedom shrieked;
 War howled,
And with its dogs let loose
 An horde of poetasters rushed
With streaming fountain pens in hand
 Fine frenzied from their lairs.
There songs of hate were sung;
 Here dirges for the dead;
Now pæans of Victory resound;
 Now hymns of Peace without it;
Epithalamia of war-won brides;
 The lullabies of martial infants crooned;
No theme nor reason was too trite for rhyme,
 No rhyme unreasonable in stress of war,
While in an undertone of lawless ecstasy
 The rhythmic beat of free verse boomed and
 growled
Like tom-toms from the Niger's ebon shades.
 World wide contagion raged.
Peers, prelates, plumbers, all became infect.
 Wealth could not buy immunity.
It fattened on the poor.
 There was no sanctuary
On shore nor in the hills.
 No hamlet was too small
To miss a visitation of the plague.
 The cities reeked with it.

No home of simple folk or merchant prince
Might mark its lintel for its passover,
And even well screened sanitarium

Failed utterly to stay the deadly germs.
I thought at first that certainly my place
Beneath the sun up here in Hillsboro
With air and water pure would sterilize
The dread bacilli if they wafted here.
But no, and thus it came about.

At the beginnings of the war
The cabled tidings bore

Constant quotations of the Kaiser's words,
And they had most to do

With murderous mandates he addressed to God
And praises for his own beloved son

And heir, who, if truth be not dead,
Is of the crew of royal scalawags
And skunks

The worst.

Then came a battle on the Prince's front
And to the son, now blooded, there was sent

By the proud father as his gift
The Iron Cross.

I read of this beneath a clear blue sky,
Sweet scented breezes drifting through the fields,
No thought of danger near.

Then the next instant, something in my brain
Began to click, and my turn too had come.
The symptoms were acute. There had to be

Blood letting or some purifying flux
To ease the fever, so I seized a pen
And purged my mind free of its distillate.

THE SECOND IN COMMAND

Sent the General Commanding to his corps commander,

God,

His orders from headquarters for the long well
plotted fight:

"Support our forward column until we break their
line;

Then let thy rod and staff descend and smite!"

Sent the General Commanding to his corps commander,

God,

A bi-plane with a message through the racked
and reeking air:

"The Count and I go murdering as soon as it is
night;

See to it that the wind to-night is fair."

Sent the General Commanding to his corps commander,

God,

An uhlan with a message out of screaming
shrieking hell:

"My Son has gained his battle and has won the
Iron Cross.

See to it that your son deserves as well!"

The direst symptom of this new disease

Is that as one succumbs he grows a-thirst
To spread it.

And so to one of those

Who guard the freedom of the people's speech

Beneath the ægis of the printed page

With two editions daily, to say naught

Of watchful "extras" turning day to night
Before its close, and on the seventh day

A monstrous parti-colored mass
Of printed pulp as final bulwark raised,

To one of these I say I took my lines
And stood with trembling knees the while he read.

"Fine! Bully! We must sure use this.
Great stuff; it's got the punch and lots of pep.

That ought to make the Hyphens take a think
And see where they get off at; here, Jim, quick,

Take this right up to Mr. Clipping's room—
He has to pass on things like this, you know."

And so we talked and passed the time of day
Until young Jim came back with note in hand.

The editor perused the message brought.
"Well, I'll be—hum—I never thought of that;
I guess he's right; he says it wouldn't do."

And handing me the screed from higher up

I read that heavy advertising came
From sundry firms with harsh Teutonic names
And that the Romish priesthood would declare
The lines anathema.

"So there you see," he said,
"What we are up against."

And as I looked I saw
The ægis rent by stealthy foes within
The city's walls, with clinking gold in hand
Instead of daggers drawn,
To rot its vitals through
Instead of stabbing them.

So back to Hillsboro went the lines
Innocuous, and in a drawer
They lay in rural quietude
Until one day

A friend with pro-Alliance in his soul
Turned in the yard to "set a spell" and talk;
And as we talked some phrasement gave the cue
To let him read the lines, and so he did.

"By thunder, I must see this thing in print
And I know just the place to take it, too.

One of the papers gets out every week
A commentary covering the war

In all its phases,
Battles lost and won,
Diplomacies, things written and things said;
I know the man who has it all in hand
And this is just the sort of thing he'd want."

And so the lines went out into the world
A second time to seek to have their say.
Time moved along and yet no loud outcry
Arose from outraged Teuton or from priest
aghast
Up from the city to the quiet hills,
And so,
I wrote a letter of inquiry to ask
Had yet the lines been used or would they be.
No answer. With an interval
I wrote again.
Again the man of war
Deigned not to make reply
And must have pocketed
The stamp from a directed envelope
I put inside my own in hopes to rouse
His better nature from its lethargy.
A third time sent and once more answer came
As when a forest tree
Comes crashing down
With no one by to hear it.
Then I knew
That now the deed was done;
One more birth-strangled babe
Had gasped its life away
Beneath the censor's hand.
But laid its ghost was not,
And like the Phoenix from a waste basket
Once more those lines rise up
To haunt 'em.

THE TRENCHES

Below a New England hillside
The broad hay meadows lie,
Sour and dank in the old time days;
By toil turned sweet and dry.
The old time men fought for them
And held against the foe
With trenches dug in the battleground
To meet the freshet's flow.

First came the swaying oxen
Tugging against the plow,
Cutting the deep black furrows
Into the sodden slough.
Followed the strength of rugged men
With mattock, bill and spade,
Deepening wide through the peat and muck
On the trail the plowshare laid.

And their trenches gained the victory
For those men who had worked and willed,
Those men who feared not honest toil
And who honored the soil they tilled.
The flags and rushes died away;
Up sprang the lush green sward
And righteously the conquerors
Came into their reward.

Below a Belgian hillside
Still other meadows lie;
Here too are lines of trenches
And upturned earth banked high.
Here too are marks upon the sward
The plowshare might have drawn
But from these entrenched meadows
All light and life are gone.

Those furrows bursting shells have plowed
Death's harvest to prepare.
The green has turned to ashen gray
Bleached by the poisoned air.
Down through the earth those trenches drain
The heart's blood of the land
That dared maintain its honor
Against the Iron Hand.

Honored throughout the ages
Those scars shall still endure.
For in those blood-stained trenches
The right still lives, secure.
But from each shell-plowed furrow
A nation without a name
Shall reap its awful harvest
Of hate, disgrace and shame.

THE WAR HOE

Aroused by the alarm before the sun
Had tinged the sky with dawn,
The veteran
Cut short his dream of peace
And roused to consciousness.
Full well he knew
How the efficient crafty foe,
All laws, humanities ignored,
Was creeping on his trenches,
For weeds and vermin work
While men do sleep.

Firstly he girded up his loins,
Which up in Hillsboro means
Put on his pants.
And then, descending to the commissariat,
Attended to the needs
The inner man made known;
Then seizing his war hoe with horny hand
He sallied forth invasion to repel.

The clash came swift.
An outpost of black crows
He put to flight
With gallant charge in flank across the field
Where corn was up, and from his path
A woodchuck scuttled for his dug-out lair.
Him he pursued with shouts and brandished blade

Until, forgetful of the wire entanglement
Which after many fees and days of law
Now marked his neighbor's acres from his own,
He dashed thereon, and there became impaled.
His wounds were slight and honorable,—
In front.

So after taking breath and stock
Of scratch and puncture, rent and tear to gear,
He turned back to the trenches over-run,
Content to put the enemy to rout.
There found he work for his good blade,
His great war hoe new purchased at the store
When the whole nation, mad for war,
Surged with the tide of dire preparedness
Till even the hills of Hillsboro convulsed
As with the throes of Vulcan at his bonds.

Platoons of pigweed, companies of dock,
Witchgrass and sorrel in battalions ranged;
Reserves of serried regiments
Of murderous unnamed auxiliaries
Stood there embattled with the corn.
He raised his battle cry and trusty steel,
And plunged into the thickest of the fray.
All day the battle raged;
But when the whistle blew
Down at the new saw mill at five o'clock,
He stood there victor on the stricken field,
The dead and dying prostrate at his feet.

Then shouldering his trenchant hoe once more
He homeward turned, aweary of the war.
The dust of battle at the kitchen sink removed,
He sought well-earned refreshment at his board.
Then cut a plug and filled the blackened pipe;
Uplifted stockinged feet to nearby chair;
Drew close the lamp and spread the weekly sheet;
Then, taking out his teeth for ease complete,
And laying them upon the checkered cloth,
He muttered to himself:

“Let there be Peace.”

MOTH NESTS

I walked among my trees to-day
With can of creosote and brush in hand
With which to smear
The nests the gypsy moths had left
Last fall, dull white excrescences
Glued fast to under side of limb
Or on the sunny side of trunk,
In devilish preparedness for spring.
When first I saw the pallid leprous mark
Upon a plum tree bursting into bud,
I felt the meaning of the new war word,
To "strafe" what one dislikes exceedingly,
And with a smear of sticky, dark brown stink
I strafed that whited sepulchre forthwith.
The day was warm, and as the buds had swelled
So had that vermin pesthouse gravid grown
With the vile horde that squirmed within its tent
To which to live meant only to destroy.
Perhaps the war word started up the train
Of thought that sometimes crackles from the
tongue
In words, for as I smeared
I heard that I had said,
"So much for you, Zeebrugge,"
And, pleased with what I heard,
I smeared again.
Cuxhaven got it next

And then Heligoland,
Then Wilhelmshaven, here a double dose ;
The same for Kiel, a nest that fairly writhed
With pent-up pestilence and death to life.
But there were far more nests than I had names
In my geography, and so
The game must end before the work was done.
And then I thought /
How bully it would be
If even now
The God to whom all kindly peoples pray
Would get it in for that Divine Pervert
With "Made in Germany" stencilled on his
 throne,
Just as the old time gods of Greece and Rome
Took up the battles of their votaries,
And with the vials of His wrath in hand
Uncork His chemicals upon those nests
And slay those other vermin in their slime.

THE RAILROAD COMMISSIONERS

Farm labor's scarcer than hens' teeth up here
In Hillsboro

And them as has a hired man

Just cosset him, I tell you what.

But every day or so we find we've got

All unbeknownst,

A brand new public servant.

Just where the servitude comes in for *him*

We find it hard to see,

For the first upshot of the critter comes

With something that he tells us

We have got to do

Or be took out behind the barn and shot

At sunrise.

But who they be or where they come from

We don't know.

We never saw 'em,

Much less voted for the likes of them

To rule us.

We looked up one, and far as we could learn,

He'd just been hauled out from some woodchuck
hole

Somewhere in the great United States

To sit beneath the Democratic sun

In cabinet or bureau or commode,—

Some kind of office furniture it was,

I don't remember which,—

And there he sat, bedazzled and half blind,
And crowbars couldn't pry him off his job.
Yet now they tell us there's more comin' still
As soon as the whole business of this war
Lock, stock, and barrel,
All gets put
Into one pair of hands.
Great God Almighty!
There's no hands but His
Can take a holt on such a job as that
And keep it!
No matter who the man is
He must do the work
Though called his own
Through other men.
And who will they be?
No one knows.
But up in Hillsboro we know
They've hauled out chucks enough
The way things lay.
Some of the boys down to the store last night
Allowed
One lot o' public servants wa'n't so bad,—
The Railroad fellers, for the evenin' paper said
As how they had decided,
After settin' on it
About three weeks,—
Just the same time it takes a settin' hen
To do her job—

That we could have some coal
To keep school buildin's warm
And heat the kitchen stove
Come winter,
So far as they's concerned,
If we would find the cars
And haul 'em up.
Don't sound so big, but when you come to think—
You know those cards you see
Stuck up in offices
With "Do it now" writ on 'em;
Well, public servants' cards all say
"It Can't Be Done."
So seein's how the Railroaders had showed
They'd got some guts
Tucked in 'em somewhere,
We thought of a few things right in their line
To put up to 'em.
First let 'em scrap
All narrow gauge and one-track minds
That make obstruction on the right o' way,
Makin' no time themselves and in the road
So nothin' else can pass 'em.
Make everything broad gauge and double track
So when some new ideas
From men whose brains
Have had the truth burnt into 'em
Come over here to tell us,
Not just talk,

There'll be some place to switch 'em on
And help our engine puffin' up the grade.
Then have some turn-tables along the line
So if a washout comes,
Or some one blows a bridge up 'cross a stream
You just run on and turn the other way
Instead of standin' like a balky mule
And starin' at the hole,
Or worse yet
Pilin' into it, too proud to yield to facts.
Then let 'em get a million of those cards,
The "Do It Now" kind, not the other ones
I spoke about,
And give each public servant
A full deck—
And joker too,—
Except it ain't no joke.
Then when they've fixed this up
There's one more thing to do.
Go down into a round-house in the yard,
The last one, just beyond the old junk pile,
And there they'll find an engine hid away
All cylinders and drivin' wheels and things
To make her hum
I never knew the names of,
And up in front two head-lights,
On the one the letter T,
And on the other
R.

Just steam her up and put her on the rails;
Then give her half a chance .
And watch her go.
They couldn't use her on the single track,—
She'd bust into a rear collision sure,—
And so all that hosspower's gone to waste
Just like the Merrimac would be
Without no mills.
Then when they get those cylinders
And drivin' wheels
And hummin' things
All goin' right
Perhaps we'll get somewhere.

AT THE STORE

There are two stores in our community
Which serve our daily needs
In friendly rivalry.
They don't compete, for both men are too smart
To swallow whole the economic fallacy
That one is bound to cut the other's throat
Because of public policy,
While the consumer gloats to see the gore;
Nor yet do they combine
In secret midnight conference,
Or at midday repast
To boost the price to their consumers
Or lower credit on what comes in trade.
Both sell their sugar at so much a pound.
Both take our new-laid eggs at equal price.
They treat us decent; and it would be well
If bigger business would adopt their ways.
One of the stores maintains a tenancy
In a brick building where in former days,
Before our civic glory made decline
And fell, where here made rendezvous
Courts with their constables,
When on the village green
Plumed captains pranced, maneuvering their men,
A printing office typed the newsy sheet;
Then stoves became the output from its doors,
But when the ironmaster died,

His works died with him, and the silent place
Became the home of spiders and stray cats,
Until, through some new deal political,
The post-office changed hands once more,
And up in Hillsboro
Post-office means a store, as store means post-office.
In came the counters, shelves and pigeon-holes;
A furnace was put in
Down in the cellar,
And by that installation, ill conceived,
The enterprise was frustrate from the start,
For in the other store there was a stove,
A little off the center of the floor,
A stove rotund, on squatty iron legs,
Of maw capacious, coal devouring;
A monster of a stove, a fierce retort
Of conflagration, with some mystic power
As of magnetic metal to attract
Near half the town to cuddle by its sides
O' nights.
Here sat the Old Guard in accustomed seats,
Set in accord with ranges found
By tried experience upon the sanded box
For salvos of a deadly skilled artillery.
No mere post-office could compete with this;
And so the fire worshippers in our town
Most all trade here.
The Baptists, Orthodox and other creeds
Do business down the street.

The other night a man came in the store
To buy some bacon.
That starts up a tongue.—
“Jim Williams killed his pig the other day”—
A silence—in respect to the deceased—
And then, “How long’d he had him? ’Bout four
years?”
“Full that; I don’t know but it’s goin’ five.”
“Well, what’d he think that he was waitin’ for?
Still pork’s gone up like thunder since the war;
But seein’s he’s been boarding him so long
I don’t believe he’d come out square at that.”
“I asked him why, myself, last fall,
And he
Said, if he was goin’ to keep a pig
He might as well keep that one, seein’s how
He had him for so long and knew his ways.”
Another man came in.
“Hello,” said he.
The Old Guard grunted.
“Hello, yourself,” said one.
“How many trout d’you ketch last Sunday up the
brook
Before the minister ketched you?”
Homeric laughter roared, for each man knew
How caught red handed with a dangling trout
The gentle angler had been herded home,
He in his Ford, the parson in his team,
Like sleuth-hound on the track of panting deer,

Keeping his quarry under frowning gaze
Until he reached the entrance to his yard.
He made defence.

"Huh! I just waited round
Until the bell began to ring, and then went up again
And started in where I left off
And got six good ones before milkin' time."
"He couldn't have done nothin', anyhow,"
From one Old Guard.

"Well, I don't know, he might ha' made complaint,"

Another veteran spoke.

"He'd had to have a warrant to arrest."

"It warn't his business, anyhow's I see."

And then in common wrangle all joined in,
Afire with theology and law.

"Is young Hurd goin' to enlist, d'you 'spose?"

"He says he would, but thinks he hadn't ought,
Seein' his mother's a dependent on him now."

Contemptuously one of the listeners spat.

"Dependent! Hell!!

He got five dollars from her six months back,
And hasn't paid it yet.

If she's dependin' upon that, she'll starve to death,
War or no war."

At the dread word, a gray haired man hunched up
A little higher in his council seat.

"Well, I don't know," said he,

"As I'd enlist myself. I done it once,

And glad to, and almost any time
'These last three years or so
I'd get so God damned mad
At readin' of the devil's work out there
In Belgium, or in France, or on the sea,
Drownin' and murderin', women, kids and all,
That I'd ha' sailed right in, old as I be,
Like any decent man if he should see
Some woman bein' beat, or child abused.
But there wa'n't nothin' done
'Towards helpin' those poor folks
Or tannin' the black hides
Of those bedevilin' 'em,
And so when war's declared at last, it seemed
'S if I'd petered out and wasn't mad at all.
I 'spose I'd sort 've got all call'used up,
The time had been so long; and then, besides,
When you get frettin' about some blame thing
That ought to be done now, and ain't at all,
The doin' sort o' peacifies your mind.
So why fight now, says I,
When we wa'n't fightin' then?
What's happened new?
Nothin's I see, except the President
Decided that the world must be made safe
For Democrats.
So we're to fight for that.
By thunder! I remember times
When they weren't safe round here:

No more were Copperheads;
But last election time they won the state
By fifty-four—or was it fifty-six—
And now they want the earth.
I'll bet Cy Sulloway is glad he's dead
Before he had to vote for such a war
And send the boys across the sea to fight
To hold down Henry Hollis on his job;
And I can't seem to get my dander up
To where it was. There's one thing, though,
This war for Democrats might bring about
I'd like to see.
They won't send our Colonel out;
Let 'em send theirs, the old he coon
Of the kaboodle of 'em;
Put Colonel William Bryan on the firing line
And see how well he'd run."
"Better'n he ever did at home, I guess."
And no one said the speaker nay.
The keeper of the store just then appeared,
A pan of ginger cookies in his hand.
One of the Council pulled up a wooden box
Into their midst to hold the offering.
"How many tonics do you fellows want?
There's sa'saparilla; all the ginger's gone."
"It's my turn, Al;"
"All right," the merchant said,
And counting noses, went out to the shed.

THE MILKMAN

My neighbor up the road keeps cows.
He used to think
That they kept him
Until one night down at the Grange
He heard the County Agent talk
In terms statistical
Of protein,
And fats,
And carbohydrates,
With mystic charts beruled in deadly parallels
Of costs and credits, ratios, averages,
And now he's not so sure.
But there are the cows,
Chewing their drowsy cud with minds at ease,
Fast-stanchioned in the barn,
All unconcerned as to the clashing claims
And traffickings
Producers,
Transport,
And distributors
Evolve,
And pass on up to him
Who sups and pays.
And there's the rut he's trod
From kitchen door to barn
Since boyhood days,
And there's the contract signed

Still operative,
Whereby he's bound
To stand and deliver at the morning train
And having there passed title to his goods
Pay freightage on them to the market place
As if they still were his.
So, though a look has come into his eyes
As of one wondering
Whether he ran a farm
Or a philanthropy,
My neighbor up the road keeps cows.
The other night he went to get his mail
And opening a letter put in hand
Perused a moment,
Then beamed smilingly,
And generous to share good news
Burst out:—
“Well now, that ain't so bad.
The Company's sent word
That owin' to the war
They're goin' to raise the price they pay
A cent a quart
Come first the month.
It comes in handy, too, just now;
Somehow or other cash is kind o' scarce
These days.
If war can help a feller out like that
I guess it ain't so bad.”
The station agent heard the words and smiled.

"Oh, by the way," he said.
"Owing to the war
They're going to raise the tariff rate on milk
A cent a can
Come first the month.
'The notice came to-day."
My neighbor pondered.
"Well, that's seven cents
Still to the good:
I guess I'll shove the cows
A little harder while the price is up
And take some feed 'long back with me to-night.
About six bags, Al;
That'll do for now."
"Oh, by the way,"
The merchant made reply,
"Owing to the war
Stock feed's up to three-fifty
Since last week."
Again my neighbor pondered at the news
In mental struggle
Arithmetical;
Then tearing into scattered paper scraps
The futile message of beneficence
He turned to go.
"I guess we'll let the cows
Keep on the way they be.
Say, fellers, ain't this war
Just Hell?"

AN AGED MAN

An aged man lives near my house
Up here in Hillsboro,
A lonely man with neither wife nor child.
He lives more with his memories
Than with the world,
For neighbors are not near
And well nigh all his kin
Have left their farms and moved
Down back of the white church
That fronts the green.
When he was born his father too
Might have been called
An aged man,
And likewise before him
His father's father came to parenthood
When most men of those fruitful days
Looked to their grandsons rather than their sons
To keep their memory green
And by their lives maintain
That earthly immortality of self
To which men cling
All prophecy and deaconed text apart.
And so it came about
That these three lives became a chain
Which linked the nation's present with the past
When nation it was not,
But scattered, scant communities

Clinging like limpets to the rockbound coast
Or palisaded in the backwoods wilderness
Against the old time owners of the soil.
Diverse of custom, race and creed
They had perforce set up
A jealous nagging intercourse
Among themselves,
With only common ground
In their allegiance to the distant realm
Of which they were a part,
As colonies, provincial,
And this a quaking sand
Except at moments when in fear of death
And arsons, ravishings and scalping knives
They lifted up their voices to their King.
Beneath his shield
They waxed strong and grew fat.
Then they discovered that they were not free.
Thus came the first war
In those three linked lives,
And father told to son how when the news
That Prescott needed men down by the Charles
Was borne to Hillsboro,
John Stark stood up in eager leadership
And led down Hillsboro's men
To give their aid.
He told him how that greatest leader came
God sent from far Virginia on the day
When Freedom's need was greatest,

And how then, godlike he led
Upon the weary way
Those bloodstained feet up to the final end.
He told how when the Hessian raiders came
Well nigh up to our doors at Bennington,
John Stark stood up again
To lead
Green Mountain boys and Hillsboro men
Against the hirelings
Their German prince had sold
For cannon fodder in an unknown war.
So these things were passed on.
Then this man's son told his
How when the British came
With fleets and veterans
To New Orleans
Old Hickory led down from Tennessee
His coonskinned riflemen
Whose volleys flaming from the cotton bales
Laid low platoons like windrows on the field.
Then how in '48 when Mexico
Drew down the nation's wrath
By Crockett's death and other murderings,
Burnings and robberies such as have passed by
No notice taken other than statistics kept
Or some bizarre demand inanely made,
Frank Pierce of Hillsboro stood up
And by sheer force of leadership
Led forth New England men to foreign war,

Unsought, unwelcome to their hearts and minds.
So the son's son had known the living word
Of all the wars the country then had waged.
Then he went forth,
In answer to the call
Of that great leader of the nation's soul
Who voiced the cry
Of Liberty in chains down in the South.
By his pure spirit got
Then there were born
In every village and in every town
In Hillsboro and throughout the land
Men fierce to lead upon the chosen path
As though they bore the cross upon crusade.
As these first leaders fell
New men arose
Inspired by the breath of Lincoln's soul
To seize the standard stricken hands had loosed
And bear it through the battle of his cause.
The aged man who lives near by my house
Was one of these.
Thus grandsire, sire and son
Each fought his country's wars,
And though there was no other son to go
Down from the hills into the pit of war
When Spain unloosed her ancient savagery
And Freedom starved and died before our doors
This aged man saw still new leaders rise
And take their stand in front

To blaze the way
And make his roll complete.
The aged man who lives near by my house
Is rich in memories but poor in purse.
An old wartime investment he once made
Of blood and splintered bone now has to yield
Most all his income though inadequate.
But there's a treasure chest,
And from it, once each year
He takes a well brushed uniform,
Dark blue with shining buttons on the breast,
A black felt hat, wide brimmed with cord of gold,
A sabre, brazen hilted and its belt,
And clad in these he musters with his Post,
To march beneath the flag
Behind the band.
This is his day of days.
Christmas and New Years, Easter, are as naught.
The Glorious Fourth
Pales into insignificance
Despite its flare of rockets and red lights
Before Memorial Day, when all his memories
Grow young again,
And he with them.
This year he did not march but rode in state;
Last year he found he tottered on the way,
And had to rest and leave his chores undone.
We talked a while the evening of his day,
Or rather he talked, for the memories

Refreshed by what had been
Sought shape in words and forth they came
For me to listen to.
He spoke of wars,
His grandsire's,
His father's
And his own,
With keen reflections and comparisons.
And then he said:
"Why, when they called for men in '61
A feller here in town was on the job
A-puttin' that tin roof up on the ell
That's on that house of yours.
He'd just begun and had to see it through,
But he got frettin' so up on the stage
The young lad helpin' with him got afeared
He'd break his neck, his mind was that upset,
And when he got the flashin' fixed up tight—
I guess it's tight now, ain't it—well, that's good—
He just come down that ladder on the run
And legged it to the clerk to take his name.
Somehow I ain't seen no one comin' down
Off any ladders like that feller did,
And there's some shinglin' goin' on in town
This spring though shingles is so awful high.
But I have noticed this
In this here war,—
I don't hear no one holler
'Come';

It's all 'Must go.'
Oh, yes, I know;
He said it.
And when he showed his teeth
He got a bit shoved in 'em quick enough.
Where are the leaders anyhow,
The men the people know,
To take the boys across the sea!
Land sakes, that's where the war is;
Thank the Lord
It ain't round here as yet a while."
I thought a moment and then queried,
"Washington?"
"I s'pose so, but the trouble is
'T ain't George,"
Said he.

THE PHRASEMAKERS

I'm tired of these phrasemakers at war,
The pedagogues and pacifists who preach
And blow their chilly breath, much better saved
To cool their porridge with,
On the fierce fires of a nation's wrath
Which seeks for retribution,
Eyes for eyes and teeth for teeth,
That plain old-fashioned justice may be done.
That is the reason why the nation fights,
And while the man behind the desk evolves
Some subtle sophistry that will not shock
The long-eared listeners still of the elect,
The man behind the gun expounds the ancient text
In common speech of short and ugly words.
If phrases there must be,
Then let them be of war,
And such as warriors use when in a righteous
cause

Their straining hearts speak out and set aflame
Their listeners with fires like their own.
No philosophic cant, no soft solicitude
For those in arms arrayed against that cause,
No speculative social maxim serves
To voice a nation's war cry for the fray.
We love our brothers as ourselves
Won't do. Rome knew and cried
Carthage must be destroyed, and so it was.

But let there be no phrases now
Of Peace
Until the nation knows there has been War
And borne and won its crosses on the field.
When that time comes "Let there be Peace"
Will cover all the ground, just Peace
With no new frills.
"Peace without victory?"
Up here in Hillsboro
"Holes without doughnuts" would ring just as
true
And smack as sweetly on the tasteless tongue.
Peace without victory means their kind of Peace,
Not ours, and that means
We're licked before we're even started in,
And asking for it,
For war is but the aim
To jam your will right down another's throat,
With such bicuspid and the like that bar the way
Until he swallows it.
A "Peace with Justice" is foretold.
Not without Victory, and Victory with wings.
But why, unless we pattern on our foe
In mock of justice, righteousness and law
Do we protest so much and that so soon
That we alone are just before the cause is tried?
Pray, fight on to victory, then Peace.
That is the order of a war;
So let us hitch our war horse on before

Our chariot, not tie it to the tail.
Withal, the phrasemakers are valiant men
And first of all bear wounds in this their war,
For every time the wingéd words go forth,
Some fragment comes a-boomeranging back
And hits 'em in the eye.

MR. HOOVER

I'm glad that Hoover is a man with fat.
No lean and hungry Cassius would suffice
As arbiter of our internal needs:
He'd lack simpatica.
A plump man knows
That mice will fatten
Where the lion starves,
And be more lenient to needed nourishment
Than would a meagre man.

I'm glad, too, that he is a man who laughs
In spite of all the piteous things he's seen.
He wept for them:
Now let him laugh with us
Until we laugh away
The sordid scares and panics and hysterias
The glum-faced statisticians spread abroad,
And learn how paltry is the sacrifice
Of cherished savors from our pots and pans.
A titbit that we do without
Perchance may be the only bit we do.
Nor is it an accepted sacrifice
To share one's daily bread with hungry men,
So let us laugh that ever we thought thus.
No one shall starve so long as Hillsboro hoes
Can flashing rise in air,
As did the stout broadswords

At Londonderry overseas erstwhile,
And as they flash
They send from hill to hill,
From hill to plain and then across the land
The message that the fight is being won.
So hold you to your faith, for there shall be
Your daily bread
And theirs.

Now what a hoover is I do not know,
But by presumption he is one who hooves;
But what it is to hoove I do not know,
Nor can I find
Elucidation in my new Britannica,
On India paper and that sort of thing,
But something tells me that the word must mean
To act with energy, efficiency,
And kindliness.
So let us place, like bronze upon a monument
To our plump, laughing fellow-citizen,
This word among those used in daily speech:
That, when our daughter's daughter tells with
pride
How much she's hooved that day
We'll know just what she means.
There's one thing quite in line with the campaign
I hope he'll do.
'Twould help conserve the food if we're to live
And take the sting from death if we're to die,

First let him cause to register
All those of either sex and every age
Who come to breakfast mornings with a grouch
And say their coffee is too hot or cold,
Then sniff the cream as if in search of taint,
Making one's own well-savored brew suspect.
Then those whose beef is always too much done
Or yet too rare, or cut too thick or thin;
Too something anyway.
Then those who can't eat this and don't like that
That's set before them for a peaceful meal,
But order special dishes from the cook,
Who's on the verge of leaving as it is.
Then those who sit at table with proud talk
Of dietetic ailments, symptoms new
And organs out of tune
Until you feel you know
Their inwards better than the outward self.
Then, having commandeered a ship,
Let them embark for one of those new isles
We've lately purchased in the southern seas
Where fresh health-bread-fruit grows upon the
trees,
Bananas, mangoes, cocoanuts galore,
And juicy pineapples beneath the palms.
There let them feast as Eve and Adam did
Until replete, they sleep,
And then
Sink that fair isle beneath the rippling waves.

THE MINISTERS

The roaring furnaces of War
Burn out the dross
From men and nations,
And the metal,
Cleansed,
Pours into new-cast moulds,
While their fierce flames
Cast on the drab of daily life
Resolve it into the stark white
Of Truth,
Or black, of lies.
We see that Governments are men
Who get up,
Wash
And go to bed
Just like ourselves,
Whether they rule by Grace of God,—
Or so they say,—
In states imperial
Or as the servants of the people's will--
Or so they say—
With louder voices or more stealthy tread
Than their constituents,
As in democracies.
All men,
Born into place
Or sitting in place sought,

Or hangers-on of those with goals attained,
Thrust by Olympian hand to high estate
Unsought,—
Or so they say—
And grin to hear it said—
We come to know.
A nation
Is the soul
Of hills and valleys,
Mountains, plains,
Whatever is the soil,
And of the lakes and rivers
Freshening the soil
That life may still endure,
By Grace of God.
We learn to know
That when the men in place
Are national in soul themselves,
That soul speaks through them,
Clear throughout the world,
And when those men are not,
But sectional,
Or partisan
Or subdivided still
Into a group of egoists,
There's but a Babel
Inarticulate.
Of lesser things
We learn that we must eat

To live;
Some must unlearn that living is to eat,
And all must learn at last
We're still alive,
All unproductive wasters that we are,
Because some men we know not of
Have labored in some fields we know not where
And fed us.
We paid,
Three prices,
But not to those men,
So now we learn;
And they, the oxen treading out the corn
Stopped treading,
Many,
And so we paid the more,
But still not to those men;
And so their sons
Shied at the yoke which bowed their fathers' heads
And left the farms, untutored, for the towns,
To sit in offices
Or clerk it in the stores,
Thinking they thought,—
Though all untaught to think at all,
Such effort was superior estate
To laboring two handed on the land.
Nor were these youths to blame
That they thought thus.
Their thinking was done for them.

They saw their fathers' toil
Unrecompensed,
And daily at their schools
The mind and all its works so deified
They got ashamed of having any hands.
School Boards,
Exalted pedagogues state salaried,
Prescribed curricula
With far less purpose than the homely dose
Of sulphur and molasses
In the spring,
Except to "train the mind."
To teach,—like them—
Was held up as the goal,
For it had not been said so all could hear
That those who can
Will do,
And those who can't
Will teach.
To teach, no matter what,
No matter why,
That was the highest aim:
In less degree
Stood occupations clerical
To do with desk and pen,
Bookkeeping, making sales
Of petty merchandise for petty sums.
These things alone were worthy of the mind.
Sweat was a vulgar word

Not in good use,
And work that made it run
More vulgar still.
So on week days
The teachers set on high
Their own profession
As the final word educative,
And on the Seventh Day
The ministers
Reared theirs,
And harrowed in the seed already sowed.
They went the pedagogues one better.
Besides the mind
The alleged soul of man
Must have its training,
And for that
The ancient texts of languages deceased
Must be perused.
They did not understand
That if the living truth be in a tongue
It will not die.
So let both soul and mind be trained
As theirs had been,
And there would stand
An educated man,
With hands ungrimed—
And well nigh atrophied.
Such were the values taught among the farms
As true ones,

Not only yesterday
But still to-day,
By pedagogues half hanged in the red tape
They spin about themselves
Like spiders' webs
And by those men who set themselves apart,
And there are kept,
Immaculate
From knowledge of the facts of life
As it is lived to-day;
Not yesterday
Among the Babylonians,
Nor yet to-morrow,
After life is flown,
Whither, they know not
From all they may have read
In cuneiform or script,
No more than we.
One of the modern minor prophets wrote
That God while working up his clay
First made
An idiot.
That was for practice;
Then reassured He made, like Rogers group,
A School Board.
I have a seat on such a board as that
Up here in Hillsboro
And splintery it is,
But we are sitting tight

And trying to work out
The right best thing to do
To help our youngsters on their purposed plans
If such they have,
Or turn them to our fields
If they have not,
Equipped to till them in full self-respect
As did their forefathers,
That they may feed
The starving ones abroad:
Send down good food to keep in strength
Our fighting men who go
That they shall starve no more;
Provide for honorable price
For those who stay at home;
And now that War
Has stamped the sterling mark
On work like this
We think we'll put it over,
Though cloistered minds may do
Their damndest.

THE CAMPS

Where is the rude, licentious soldiery
Of former days!
The roisterers and swaggerers who dashed
Hot foot
Through some sweet village of the plain
With barking pistols,
Flashing blades,
And plumes astream,
And having put to rout its garrison
Made rendezvous
Before the village inn,
Chuckling the chickens beneath uplifted chins,
The chickens chuckling to be thus chucked,
Then crowding round the board with jests and
shouts,
“Hola, good host, another stoup of wine!”
The d’Artagnans, the Hawkwoods, the Dundees,
The Falstaffs, Zaglobas and Cids;
Those blood-letters and tosspots of the past;
Those men with blood as red as the red wine
They quaffed;
Those men we’ve loved,
Whose feats in love and war
First made our infant hearts swell emulate
In virile rhythmic beat;
Where is the rude, licentious soldiery
Of former days!

Where are the bully boys
Of former days!
Those tarry pig-tailed mariners who sailed
The Seven Seas,
Blood brothers of Long Tom and Davy Jones,
Squaring their yards according to the wind
For fair-haired Hilda
Of the Skagerrack,
Or dark-eyed Nita
Of the Spanish Main,
And as the sun peered over the yard arm,
Poured down their thirsty throats
Their pannikins
Of fiery grog!
Those lions of the sea
Whose rants and roars
Outvoiced the tumult of the winds and waves;
Where are the bully boys
Of former days!

.
The d'Artagnans
One Secretary says
He has,
Enrolled, benumbered in red ink,
Card-catalogued,
Hog-tied and bound in Gordian red tape.
The bully boys
Josephus says
He has,

Caged with his taming lions of the sea
To lap their milk

And eat out of his hand.

And both these war lords
Constantly maintain

By act official or the spoken word
Their charges are not fit

To be at large,
As though, when putting on
Their country's uniform,
They had cast off
All else

Save appetites.

So with the end to save
The countryside from them,
Them from themselves,
Barbed wired camps are planned
And at each guarded gate
Signs Janus faced set up

"You shall not pass,"
Just as was said at Verdun
To the Huns.

Within the precincts sanctified
Movies well censored,
Soda water stands,

Chautauquan lecturers on themes of peace
All pander to the happy warriors
Sequestered there
And dissipate their minds

Of vain carnalities.
Outside the bounds
The world still wags.
It almost seems
As if a present benefit might come
If those our war lords would but call to mind
That legend of the cloistered monk
Siberian,
Who, drearied by the life he'd led,
Burst forth
With horrid cries
And—well, a moral's there.
Now one sees on the screen
Our d'Artagnan,
Our hero, Bakerized,
Strolling along a straight and narrow path,
Lights shining virginal—
Not red—
On either side;
Sweet Molly Coddle
Clinging to his strong right arm,
Grim Mrs. Grundy
Closing up the rear,
Seeking a sundae before sound of taps;
And so to bed.

THE GARBAGE PAIL

Instead of keeping Watch upon the Rhine
 As do our enemies,
Our good friend Mr. Hoover tells us all
 To Watch the Garbage Pail,
And so our voices rise
 In choral anthem national.
I, being bowed with years,
 Flat-footed and bespectacled,
With mastication turned
 From instinct
To an art,
 And so debarred from mixing it
With younger men with bombs and bayonets,
 And yet with spirit keen
To do my bit,
 Avowed myself to watch
The one
 The Dei ex-machina Democratica maintain
In Washington
 Wherein they dump
Discarded policies too raw to serve
 Upon the people's plate
As yet;
 Fads, phrases, theories
Charred and burnt to crisp
 Beneath the flame of Truth;
Mexican messes mixed and served

To be spat out again,
And all things unambrosial
To their taste.
I watched, and came the day I saw
A soldier,
Brave, loyal, much-beloved,
Dumped into the brew
And disappear.
Defective vision was the whispered word.
His keen eyes saw too far
Ahead,
When those who would not see
Were blind.
But worse, he told abroad of what he saw
And broke the new command
"Thou shalt not tell."
Next with a mighty splash
As when
Into the blue Ægean fell
The Rhodian colossus,
Came an ex-President,
And the cauldron seethed
And boiled
Until the lid was clamped
Fast down
And sat on by the baker
Palpitant,
Whose hands had not the strength
To knead such dough

And so made waste of it

With half of Europe crying for such bread
As it would make.

Another day and joined these two
A third,

Another soldier,
Known to all the world

By works no Pharaoh had dared,
Canned!

I shall still sit
Up here

Upon my Hillsboro Hill
And watch,

Just as the knitting women watched
The falling heads

Beneath the guillotine,
And as I sit

I'll think
What noble company there is

Inside that pail!
And I shall wait and see

What in the end
Will fill that pail

And who will fill it.

THE EXEMPTION BOARDS

The Squire came up to the house last night
To sit beneath the elms out in the yard
And watch the fireflies and stars come out
Over the orchard just across the wall.
He likes to hear my tree frogs
With abodes
Somewhere aloft up in the whispering leaves,
Clacking and trilling in their weird discourse,
And listen to a vagrant whippoorwill
Who chants our country's war cry
From the pines.
So there we sit and smoke
Our pipes
When he thus honors me,
And watch and listen to those things
And to each other as the thought may move
To speech.
Last night a gentle breeze came eddying by
Heavy with perfume from the patch of mint
Beside the kitchen door.
There are oases in all desert lands
And when such inspiration wafts
Straight from the starry skies,
There's just one thing to do.
I did it,
And as the Squire laid
His clinking frosted glass

Upon wide arm of chair,
"That's good," he said,
And so it was.
Then in a moment,
"We got through to-day.
The draft is drawn
And those exempt excused.
Some of those men exempt
Will stay
With honor equal to the accolade
On those who go,
And some will not.
Taking it all in all,
It's been the greatest test
The Country as a whole
Has ever had,
And it has proved
That flabby, incoherent, as it seemed,
The Nation has a Soul
That's all its own,
Knowing no North nor South
Nor East nor West,
For everywhere the acid was laid on
Pure metal showed
Magnetic
To the Stars and Stripes.
It was a thing I hoped
But did not know.
Now I know that

And I've learned more besides
These last days I've been handling men's lives
Like chessmen
Than all I ever knew
Before.
What was our job ;
To pick and choose
From those the doctors,
Having turned away all those
Diseased, unsound of body or of mind,
Had certified as fit,
The fittest
To do the Country's business
Abroad,
And maybe
Die at it,
Leaving those same
Diseased,
Unsound of body
Or of mind,
To do the Country's business
At home,
And maybe
Fatten on it.
What is the Law ;
The fittest shall survive ;
And every time I wrote my name
Made mock of it.
Now I have lived my life

Within the law,
And when I see a hand
Upraised against it,
Though the hand be mine,
My instinct is to strike it down.
But as I sat with mind disturbed,
Well nigh rebellious at the things I did
I came to see
That such is the law of flesh,
But that the higher law
The spirit serves
Is this,
That he who has the most
To give
Must give the most
Or stand ignoble.
But take this matter of the Country's business
Done as I've said:
Reduce it down
To lowest terms
And some absurdity
And let's see what we see.
There are the generous,
The fittest,
Going forth
For war to swallow up.
Here the self-seekers,
The lame, halt and blind,
The morons, criminals, degenerates,

Breeding like rabbits
With their proper mates
While thoroughbreds remain
Unhusbanded.
And these male derelicts will be
The voting strength
To place in office representatives
Of such as they.
In Boston,
When the Legislature sits
The crier calls upon his God to save
The Commonwealth.
So far
He has,
But take it there and here and everywhere,
State capitols and national,
With Houses filled
With such a scum
As would be bound to rise
From such a broth,—
I guess He'd have his hands full.
The draft was called
Selective
And the Boards
Exemption.
Our phrasemakers went wrong again
On that.
The calling many for the chosen few
Is one thing,

But Exemption means
A letting off,
And not a taking on
And honor.
But be that as it may,
It's done,
And so well done
By all those boys and men
Who came up to the scratch
When duty called
I marvel at it,
For they came
Undriven,
And unled.
Now let us left behind
Do what we can for them
To make the Country safe
While they're away.
So let the same Boards sit
And make selective draft
Of those most fit
To do the Country's business
At home
While they accomplish it
Abroad.
Cancel the voting lists
And let a plague descend
On parties.
Then let the Nation's sons and daughters come

And show cause why they should be deemed of
worth

To govern it.

Yes, I said daughters.

It's the first time, too,

And yet for fifty years

I've known

My mother knew lots more

Than I did."

A falling star swept flaming through the sky.

"Do you suppose what I just said

Did that?

I guess I'd better get along

Before the heavens fall."

THE JUDGES

A man built him a house of logs
And in the clearing that he made
He planted corn,
And while he hunted for their meat
His wife and children tended it.
Then other men
Came hewing through the wilderness
And built their houses near at hand
Until a scattered settlement took shape
And thoughts of common welfare came to mind.
They built a mill to grind their corn to meal
And saw the great pine logs
To timbers and wide boards
So clean of knot and rot
They seemed like parchment surfaces.
The man most reverend
And learned in the Book
They made their pastor;
The most valiant man
They made their captain,
And the wisest man in life and law
They made their magistrate,
And in him sat
The law they willed to serve.
So with the common weal thus organized
Their doings prospered.
The clearings turned to fields with waving wheat

Where once the corn
Hilled in among the blackened stumps
Had rustled in the wind,
And woolly sheep and cows with calves
Fed where the antlered stag had browsed.
Their wealth increased in goods,
And of their lands
The bounds and monuments
Once indeterminate,
Became of moment, for entitlement
To present use or ultimate descent;
So new surveys were made,
Lines run and scraps of paper signed
In covenant of rights established there
Between man and his neighbor man.
With new assurance new endeavor came.
Young fruit trees were set out,
White with sweet blossoms for the humming bees.
New fields were plowed,
Wet meadow lands were drained
For hay and pasture for the flocks and herds
And sturdy horses they had learned to rear.
Men's eyes grow envious as they behold such
things
That are not theirs.
One summer night
An envious man
Of violence and craft
Arose and entered on the acreage

That joined his own,
An orchard of young trees about to bear,
Upon a slope with outcrop in a ledge
His mind obsessed with greed opined
Held precious mineral.
There sat him down with loaded gun in hand,
And when his neighbor came
Declared the land was his.
It lay beneath the sun; the harvest was assured;
His own bounds were outgrown;
He wanted it;
Therefore 'twas his,
And threatening with his piece
He thrust the owner from the land
He'd worked and toiled for.
The magistrate arrived with record in his hand
Showing the metes and bounds set up
By covenants recorded,
But the envious man
Laid hands upon the proffered document
And tore it up,
And spit upon the fragments on the ground,
And shouted God would this and God would
that
Before he'd yield the land.
Then to the captain went the magistrate,
And to the man of wrath the captain went,
Up to the very muzzle of the gun
That belched into his face,

But all unscathed,
The captain smote the man,
And knocked him down
And mastered him,
Struggling and biting like a rat
Within that stalwart grip.
And then the captain brought him to the place
Of common gathering
And sent out the word
That every man with lands should gather there
Forthwith, and likewise there be brought
The wife and child of the unrighteous man
To look upon him sitting in his bonds
And hear what might be said
As to his deeds.
Together came those men, well armed.
Up rose the captain with the man of law
Beside him, giving countenance
And earnest of the law
To what was to be done.
And then the captain spoke and said:
"You men of Hillsboro are now a court;
Not a court martial for there is no war.
I have made peace with this right hand of mine
And stopped the envious war
This man here had declared against us all,
Threatening our lives unless our lands be his,
For as such do to one they do to all.
There's no end to it when it once begins.

But as a court of peace and equity
 You sit,
And now the question is for your decree
 What shall be done with this man tethered here
Who knows not how to give
 But only fierce to take
From those more weak and needful than himself.
 We've known his works and ways
As he has lived among us,
 Unloved, unneighbored, but were unsuspect
Such violence and greed
 Were in him till to-day.
But now this day has come and well it came
 Before the mind diseased
With covetous imaginings,
 Lust for possession and his envious greed
Had made him strong as men insane are strong
 And I'd not handled him.
And let not this day end
 Until we're done with him
For good and all,
 That lives and lands be safe
And peace be kept among us.
 So now do you consult, then speak your will."
Then rose the pastor from his place.
 "It is our will
That this man be outcast
 From our community.
There's no communion with him

For the bread and wine
Have never touched his lips.

There shall be paid to him
Just value for his land

And for the buildings he has raised
Upon it,

And for such goods of his
As are not moveable.

Then with his cattle let him go his way
Into the further wilderness,

And there,
Where tooth and nail establish right and law,
Among his fellow beasts let him contend
As with his kind.

His wife and child may follow if they will
Or dwell with us and from the common wealth
Be here maintained as need may be
As they may choose."

The magistrate took down the fateful words,
And then the captain, bending down,

Unloosed the cords which bound the banished
man.

"Stand up;

Now go," he said,

"Accounting will be made."

The man stood up with curses in his eyes.

"Come, woman."

The young wife shrank away
With face averted.

"Come, you," he spoke again.

The little child

Gazed at the naked soul of him whom she had
called

Her father,

And said, "I am afraid."









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